

Plan Your Holy Land Event

United Methodists' Holy Land Task Force

Visit us at: www.umhltf.org

This guide should help you think through the details of holding an event. For many simple church events, some of these elements will be obvious or will not apply.

But think outside the box, even if you have done events before at your church. Something new and a bit unexpected can be the key to a successful event.

Don't let the length of the planning suggestions here discourage you! We have tried to supply information for many types of events. Be realistic about what you can handle, keep the event as simple as you need it to be, and just use what information is helpful to you.

If you would like advice or assistance in locating what you need, you can contact us at: info@umhltf.org. We would love to hear what you are planning, and will do everything we can to help you plan and hold your event.

Name of event

It can be just a simple description, and shorter is better “Justice and Peace in the Middle East.”

“It's Time for Peace in the Holy Land!” “Mid East Peace - What can we do?”

If you can think of something catchier, so much the better.

Purpose(s)

Education? Fellowship? Advocacy? Building Membership?

Your event can have more than one purpose, but it is best to be clear from the start what those are, to make the best choices of how to spend your budget, allocate your time before and during the event, and to make sure you stay focused on what you really want to accomplish.

Even educational events should provide some followup action for attendees to take. Schedule another gathering? Start discussing the issues or future events/action by email? Write a letter or email to government officials or to newspapers? Donate money? What else would work for your attendees? Let them discuss and suggest what they are interested in doing.

People often intend to write letters but never get around to it at home. You could

set some time at the event for people to write a letter or postcard there, and provide them with materials as well as sample text. Then you can mail those in to the government, newspapers etc.

Who

Who are you hoping will attend this event? One particular committee? Your congregation? People in the surrounding community? Beyond your church, people in the district or the conference?

When

Date and time, duration/ending time

Depending on who you are inviting, when would the most people be available? Think about when clergy and laity have the time to come, if you want both. If they have children, when would that prevent them from attending? Are they working people, retirees, students?

Where

building and room

What size space is needed - how many people are expected/hoped for?

Is the location accessible to all you are hoping will come?

Is parking available and adequate? What other transportation is available?

Childcare

Do you need to provide childcare? where will that be and who will handle it? Are they qualified? you should always have more than one person with children, for safety of the children and for protection from liability of the adults and the institution involved.

Attendance Fee

Will you charge for attendance? If so, is it to cover costs, or to raise additional funds? What can your intended participants afford? How strong is their interest and what, if anything, would they be willing to pay for this event? Can you offer a discount to “members?”

Staff

Event Coordinator

Assistants - to help in each major element of the event: Publicity, program, making/planning materials, registration, equipment, décor for event, food prep, etc.

Helpers - willing hands on the day of the event or earlier, to carry out task such as setup, cleaning up, making décor, collating/folding/stapling, driving to do errands, etc.

Funding and Budget

Where is your funding coming from? Can your church help? Can individuals who care about these issues provide a donation? If they make it to your church, and that money is designated for your event, it can be a tax-deductible donation. Talk to your pastor about that. Are there other sources who might help to fund such an event?

Possible items to consider in planning your budget:

publicity, food, printed materials, video or music, speaker or performer fees, room fees, childcare, equipment....others?

Food/refreshments

Is this an event with a meal? Find some suggested Middle Eastern dishes and recipes at our website, under Taking Action What facilities do you need and have access to for preparing and/or serving food? And for cleaning up?

If you are not having a meal, will you offer some refreshments? Even the simplest events often go better when a little refreshment is offered, even if it is just coffee/tea and condiments for those. And it is a very Middle Eastern custom to offer that minimal hospitality to all guests. A plate of cookies or other finger food would be a nice touch also - baklava would fit well and can be found sometimes at Trader Joe's and other food store.

Supplies for simple refreshments: cups, napkins, stirrers, hot water or coffee urn, instant coffee or brewed, tea bags, sugar, other sweetener, creamer, perhaps a cold beverage? in addition to hot or instead of it?, serving plate for snack, the snack itself.

Advance Schedule

Publicity: how far ahead do you want the news to go out to give people time to plan to attend? At least 2 weeks or more is advisable. If you can start a month ahead, follow that up with repeated announcements closer to the date, to remind them, and to reach some who didn't read the first one. The more repeats, the better! It sends the message this is really an important event, not to be ignored.

What are the deadlines for things you want to be in: church or other newsletters, Sunday bulletins, email news (such as the Cal-Pac Update - usually comes out every Friday, and the deadline is Wednesday of that week - submit your item to Larry Hygh, Cal-Pac Director of Communications at: lhygh@cal-pac.org.)

Have you considered an email to your district? Contact you district office to see if they will send out an announcement for you.

How much time do you need to prepare printed materials and print them?

To prepare the meal or refreshments?

To setup and decorate the room?

To find other needed elements, such as equipment - will they be borrowed? rented?

Do you need to order a dvd or things that will come by mail? Allow time for mailing.

Do you need time to shop for those things or for food or décor? How much time for shopping? Can you locate in advance where you will need to go, by phone or on the internet?

Event Schedule

Plan the entire schedule of the event - what will happen during this day? Elements to consider, though not in any particular order here: registration, eating, fellowship time, discussion among the attendees, listening to a speaker, receiving materials, watching a video, listening to music, watching a performance, engaging in writing or creating something, signing up for something.

Set up - be generous! Allow yourself plenty of time for setup and make sure you will have help to get it done, especially if heavy things need to be moved.

Event - plan the schedule in detail, and be realistic about how long it takes for each part - registration, speakers or other program, discussion, etc.

Plan on a little “wobble” room for some things that will get off schedule.

Take down and clean up - you should leave any facility as good as you found it, if not better. Make sure you will have help after the event for cleaning up.

Additional elements for the program

Do you need to get equipment? If so, set it up and try it beforehand! Will the speaker need a microphone and audio system? Do you need a tv or other screen for a dvd? Who knows how to run the equipment you will use?

Are you playing a dvd? Where is it coming from?

Will you have music at any point (a nice touch when people are coming in, or any time they are talking casually). How will you play it? What music will you use?

Will you have a speaker? See the groups at our website, or contact us for help, if you cannot locate a speaker.

Will you have a performance? Music,, dance, drama? See some suggestions at our website for those also.

Printed Materials

Consider the need not to waste paper when you are planning your printed materials. What are the essential pieces of information you want people to have? What will they need right there, and what do you hope they'll take home? Can you give short or abbreviated versions and give them a website (such as umhltf.org) to download what they want?

How many copies do you need? Can you minimize the quantity and make more of them quickly if you run out? If not, are some of the documents ones that can be used again at a later date? Or can you recycle the paper afterward?

Registration

Be sure to plan this in a way that will not allow long lines to build up and slow down the process. Perhaps several people sitting at registration tables, with several lines for attendees?

Gathering information: Even at the simplest events, it is a good idea to collect contact information, to build on what you accomplish that day. Have someone assigned to that task, and make sure they have supplies. A registration sheet is good, which indicates the information you want: name, email address(es), telephone number(s), mailing address?, and if applicable: which home church, which district, which organization, etc.

Printed materials and folders: If you are providing a significant amount of materials, can you also provide a folder to hold them in? If so, think about an adhesive label to on the front, that you can print from your computer. Avery and other companies make that easy to do. A label with the name of your event will help people to locate these materials in the future, and remind them about your event.

Nametags - if there is any chance not everyone will know each other, nametags are an excellent idea, which is often overlooked. It lends a professional touch to the event, and really helps people in talking to others (and in remembering names of those they are supposed to know!).

The kind that are adhesive are the cheapest and most practical, with no issues of how and where to connect them. Have felt markers handy - they show up much better than pens.

Publicity!!!

Many people neglect this, just do the minimum publicity, and hope/assume people will come. A big mistake! If you do not have a good attendance, your efforts in

planning a great event have been wasted. It takes effort to get that good attendance, but the effort brings results. Think of every way you can reach people, do all those, and then think again.

Email - personal ones to individuals you know, and also to the congregation or other membership. Think of other lists you can send your announcement to, besides the obvious one(s). Even if just one or two more people come, that was worth it. But be sure those groups would allow such an announcement.

Phone calls - nothing gets results like personal calls to everyone on your list - VERY effective in getting people to show up who otherwise would let this event pass them by.

Design a nice looking, not too crowded announcement that has all the pertinent information and least one graphic element, like a moving photo, logo(s), etc.

That can be used in the form of flyers, announcements for publications, to go on websites, etc.

Use social networking on the web, if you have access, such as Facebook, twitter, etc.

Ask anyone who has a related website to put your announcement on it.

Flyers at church, and sent out to others who are requested to put them up at their church.

Announcements in newsletters, church bulletins, etc - plan ahead and know the deadlines for the publication you want to be in. Find out who gives permission for your announcement to be included.

Paper mailings?

Décor

Many people do not think any décor is needed, but a small effort in this area can make an event much more welcoming, have a stronger impact, and leave a lasting impression in the attendees.

Some décor to consider:

Posters and banners - you can hang posters on walls or doors using ribbon or string. Or use double sided tape or poster foam. You might just get some poster board and cover it with photos from the Middle East - Palestinian refugees, Israelis and Palestinians at peace rallies, etc. Add a piece of paper in the center with a message to bring it together.

Table coverings - both for dining tables, AND for information or registration tables. Something neat and clean at the very least. If it has the look of being Middle Eastern cloth or is in a color scheme that fits the surroundings, so much the better.

Centerpieces - for dining tables. Flowers always work, but if you want to go

the extra mile, something that pertains to the event can be a real eye-catcher.

Candles - these always add a great ambience to any space, indoors or out. You can just have a couple lighted on a registration table, or a few tea lights scattered on a dining table. Be sure to put a coaster or at least a small piece of paper under any candle - they often run over, even tealights in metal holders. (See below an easy candle decoration that adds a message to your décor.)

Other meaningful items to have on information and registration tables – Framed photos of people from the region - our website and Google images should help you locate some.

Any products made in the Middle East - olive wood carvings, olive oil from Palestine, etc.

Gifts and Sale Items

Do you want to give the attendees something to remember this event or your group?

Possibilities that you might be able to make or to order online: booklets, pamphlets, bumper stickers, other size stickers, pens & pencils, pins and badges, bookmarks, notecards, small posters.

You also could sell items that they would appreciate having: books, dvds, cds.

Check back at our website, www.umhltf.org; we will be adding designs and sources for items to give and to sell.

Décor Ideas

Purchase some items made in Palestine and display those on your registration table or a book or resource table: items made of olive wood, bottle(s) of Palestinian Olive Oil, embroidered fabric items.

Two possible sources:

The Palestine Online Store - <http://www.palestineonlinestore.com/>

INAASH, who sell textile products embroidered by Palestinian women in refugee camps in Lebanon: <http://www.inaash.org/>

Centerpieces

1- A book or books that pertain(s) to the subject, sitting under the flowers, or under a candle. If more than one book in a pile, turn the bindings in different directions, for more people to see the titles.

2- Surround your flower vase with a tube or box of paper, printed with images/photos/a message.

3- Put a message, image or photo on 2 pieces of paper, perhaps 4" x 4." See the images in the pdf file you can download at our website: www.umhltf.org – see Take Action: Plan an Event Or use any photos or words you find inspiring. Could be just the title of your event, or a slogan: "It's Time for Palestinians & Israelis to share a Just Peace!"

Cut out the two images/messages. Using a long wood stick (at many craft stores, and also in food markets - wooden skewers for barbecuing), tape or glue the 2 pieces of paper back to back with one end of the stick in between them. Put the stick in a vase with a few flowers. Make sure the message or picture can be seen above or among the flowers.

Placemats –

download one example at www.umhltf.org. Take Action tab: Plan an Event

Print some interesting information or images on paper that is letter size (8.5" x 11") or legal size (8.5" x 14"). Make that your placemat for dinner tables.

You can use a few of these on an information or registration table also, even if you are not having dining tables.

Table Tents

download several samples at www.umhltf.org. Take Action tab: Plan an Event

Make table tents with messages that speak on the issues, identify specific areas of information, or encourage people to take handouts, etc. Just print on one third of a letter size sheet, and then fold the paper into a triangular tube, so that it will sit on a table.

Illuminated candle tubes:

Download a pdf file with instructions and samples of illuminated candle tubes you can print and use, at www.umhltf.org. See Take Action: Plan an Event.

An easy project to make more of your candles and enhance your message: take a sheet of letter size paper, 8.5" x 11". Plan to use a portion that is only 5" x 11".

On a computer, arrange your page horizontally rather than vertically. Place on that portion you will use 2 or 3 photos or images, or possibly some wording to fit your theme. Print the page, and then cut the paper to the finished size 5"x11". Make a tube of that paper which is 5" tall when sitting on a table. To make the tube, overlap the ends of the paper slightly and connecting it with tape or staples.

(Double-sided tape looks good for it will not show on the outside.) Put a votive or

tealight in the center of the tube, sitting on a table. The candle will illuminate the image from within. Better to use the thinnest cheapest paper possible - copy paper (20 lb paper) is better than printer paper (24 lb). At a paper specialty store, you can get translucent paper which works particularly well for this.